

THE 1989 HAT YAI ACCORDS

JOHN J. COE

*Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences
GPO Box 4646, Darwin NT 0801, Australia.*

ABSTRACT

This research paper reviews the background to and the impact of the 1989 Accords between the Communist Party of Malaya and the Government of Malaysia and the Communist Party of Malaya and the Kingdom of Thailand. The writer was an Observer at the signing of the Agreement.

KEYWORDS: Hat Yai, Malaysia, Thailand, Communist Party of Malaya, CPM, Accords, Chin Peng, Chaovalit, Kittii.

PREAMBLE

At a press conference in southern Thailand on 30 November 1989, Secretary General Chin Peng of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), confirmed his intention to sign a peace agreement with the Governments of Malaysia and Thailand. On 2 December 1989, before an audience of some 350 dignitaries and press representatives, Chin Peng, with the Chairman of the Communist Party of Malaya, Abdullah C.D. and long time Central Committee member, Rashid Midin, formally abandoned their long standing armed challenge to power in Malaysia. Under the terms of the joint communique issued at the peace agreement:

Former members of the disbanded armed units led by the Communist Party of Malaya have given their pledge to Thailand and Malaysia to respect the laws of these two countries and to participate in the socio-economic development for the benefit of the people (Joint Communique by the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand, the Government of Malaysia, The Communist Party of Malaya, 2.12.89, Hat Yai).

The Agreement (hereafter described as the 'Accords') marked the end of an era. In light of the general *denouement* of international Communism, it is appropriate that the CPM's decision to enter into a negotiated settlement be subjected to analysis.

INTRODUCTION

South East Asia's oldest insurgency came to an end almost as abruptly as it began. At 1040hrs on a sultry and rain sodden Saturday,

the 12th floor ballroom of the Lee Gardens Hotel in Hat Yai erupted in applause as signatories from Thailand, Malaysia and the CPM signed, countersigned and lifted glasses of champagne to each other's health.

Thus concluded an insurgency that commenced in 1948 - the year of the Berlin airlift, predating by six years the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu.

In that year the Malayan Communist Party launched its revolution against the British in Malaya. After a decade of bitter fighting, political manoeuvring and the inevitable civilian casualties, the Communists were defeated and politically discredited. Beaten but unbowed, the remnants of the Communist army moved into the border sanctuary of the Betong salient in southern Thailand. Here the Party regrouped and planned its return.

Contemporary history deemed this was not to be. Despite several attempts to infiltrate back into the peninsula, the Party was unable to regain either the political or military initiative integral to successful revolution. Thus was the revolution contained.

The Communist thrust for power was distinguished by paradox. The armed and political struggle was conducted by the Communist Party of *Malaya* (emphasis added) against the sovereign states of Malaysia and Singapore, directed from sanctuaries in southern Thailand by an enigmatic leader resident in China.

Despite the Communist claims to be in the vanguard of the peoples of Malaya, the Party enjoyed the distinction of being in effective exile since 1953 from the homeland it purported to be liberating. The question of liberating who from whom remained vexatious.

The simple ceremony that signalled the end of hostilities was in itself a curious paradox. The spectacle of a Government treating with a political party it did not recognise at a conference hosted by another state at whose behest the parties foregathered, clearly appealed to the imagination of a large contingent of the South East Asian press corps.

Notwithstanding, the occasion was an unqualified triumph of diplomatic nuance and a media event *par excellence*.

On reflection, the Accords marked the end of an era. The insurgency remained an embarrassing legacy of a colonial era, an unwelcome spectre of racial and social divisions; it remained a knot in the political psyche of two generations of Malaysians and Singaporeans and a constant irritant in the bilateral relations between Thailand and Malaysia.

Within the broader geopolitical setting, the decision by the CPM to abandon the armed struggle must be seen in the context of the changing nature of international Communism and the shifts in China's 'westpolitik'.

This paper will review the background to the agreement; it will describe the nature and content of the press conferences and the official signing ceremony and it will discuss some of the ramifications of the Accords. It will provide, as appendices, extracts as recorded by the writer from the two press conferences; the text of the Joint Communiqué; a list of Signatories to the Agreement and a copy of Secretary General Chin Peng's speech at the signing ceremony.

BACKGROUND

The Communist Party of Malaya is the oldest political movement in Malaysia and Singapore. Formally established in 1930 by the Comintern under the tutelage of the Communist Party of China (CCP), its origins can be traced to the Comintern activities in the region in the early 1920's.

In its formative years the Party was subject to the uncertainties of the power plays between the Comintern and the CCP that were to presage the Sino-Soviet split two decades later. In the course of its history the CPM initiated several successful industrial campaigns and, basking in the prestige of controlling a successful resistance army against the Japanese, it earned for itself a brief period of respectability. A crippling leadership crisis

helped precipitate the Party into a period of political violence better known to students of contemporary military affairs as 'the Malayan Emergency'. Following its defeat in the field, the Party suffered a series of 'rectification' campaigns, ideological traumas, internecine feuds and finally a major split.

The final chapter in the history of the movement opened in 1970. In September of that year, the 8th Regiment broke away from the Party to form the Communist Party of Malaya (Revolutionary Faction). After ongoing and fractious debate, on 1 August 1974, the Second Military Zone broke away to form the Communist Party of Malaya (Marxist-Leninist Faction). The original Chin Peng faction became known as the CPM (Orthodox Faction.) On 5 December 1983, the Marxist-Leninist and Revolutionary factions merged to form the Communist Party of Malaysia. (Coe 1988a:170)

The presence of the Party tri-partite in Thailand in the 1980's became an embarrassment to the Thais. Drawing upon their own extensive counter-insurgency experience and the highly successful Civil-Police-Military techniques developed by General Saiyud Kerdphol under Order 66/23 (Saiyud 1986), the Thai Fourth Army launched a dual military and civil offensive to draw the CPM out of the jungle.

In the opening weeks of 1987 the Communist Party of Malaysia, through its military arm, the Second Military Zone of the Malaysian People's Liberation Army, entered into a negotiated settlement with the Thai Fourth Army. The substance of this agreement required the former to abandon its armed struggle and place itself in the hands of the Thai military authorities. This agreement was conditional, however, on a guarantee that members of the former Liberation Army would not be repatriated involuntarily to Malaysia and that they would be given the opportunity to participate in the civil reconstruction of Thailand, through a resettlement programme (Anonymous 1987a). In accordance with the terms of this historic agreement, on 28 April 1987 some 542 guerrillas emerged from the jungle, laid down their arms and equipment and attended a reconciliation ceremony in a remote jungle clearing near Betong attended by the Commander of the Fourth Army and other Thai military and civil dignitaries.

ให้ท่านผู้มีเกียรติทุก ๆ ท่าน จงประสบแต่ความสุข ความเจริญรุ่งเรือง ทั่ว สันติสุข กับขอให้ สันติภาพที่พวกเราได้ร่วมกันสร้างสรรขึ้นมาในโลกอันนี้ จงสถิตสถาพรสืบเนื่องถึงพันปี และนำมาซึ่งสันติสุข ความผาสุก และความเจริญรุ่งเรือง และความร่มเย็นอันดีของ ประชาชนทุกหมู่เหล่า และทุกเชื้อชาติในภูมิภาคนี้สืบไป ขอขอบคุณ

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

BY

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND
THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA,
THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA

1. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND, THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA, AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA, CONSISTANT WITH THEIR COMMON DESIRE FOR RECONCILIATION AND PEACE, HAVE REACHED THE MUTUAL AGREEMENTS, ONE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA AND THE OTHER BETWEEN THE INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS COMMAND REGION 4 OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA TO TERMINATE ALL ARMED ACTIVITIES AND BRING PEACE TO THE ENTIRE THAI-MALAYSIA BORDER REGION AND MALAYSIA.

2. FORMER MEMBERS OF THE DISBANDED ARMED UNITS LED BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA HAVE GIVEN THEIR PLEDGE TO THAILAND AND MALAYSIA TO RESPECT THE LAWS OF THESE TWO COUNTRIES AND TO PARTICIPATE IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PEOPLE. THAILAND AND MALAYSIA WILL PROVIDE FAIR TREATMENT TO THESE MEMBERS. THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA WILL IN DUE COURSE ALLOW FORMER MEMBERS OF THE DISBANDED ARMED UNITS LED BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA WHO ARE MALAYSIAN CITIZENS OR WHO HAVE BECOME MALAYSIAN CITIZENS TO FREELY PARTICIPATE IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION AND THE LAWS OF MALAYSIA.

3. ALL THREE PARTIES RECOGNISE THAT THIS HONOURABLE SETTLEMENT WILL BRING PROSPERITY, STABILITY AND SECURITY TO THE THAI-MALAYSIAN BORDER REGION AND MALAYSIAN.

4. THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA EXTEND THEIR HEARTFELT GRATITUDE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND FOR ITS EFFORTS IN PROVIDING FACILITIES FOR THE HOLDING OF THE TRIPARTITE PEACE TALKS AND IN BRINGING ABOUT THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE PEACE TALKS.

ผู้ร่วมลงนามความตกลงสันติภาพ 3 ฝ่าย
SIGNATORS IN PEACE AGREEMENT

ฝ่ายไทย THAI SIDE

- 1. พล.อ.ชาลิต ยงใจยุทธ 103 ร.8.ป.ก.
GEN. CHAVALIT YONGCHAIYUDH DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS COMMAND
- 2. พล.อ. ยุทธนา ยิ้มตันธุ์ ร.8.ป.ก.ภาค 4
LT. GEN. YOOTHANA YAMPUNDHU DIRECTOR, INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATION COMMAND REGION #4
- 3. พล.ท.อ.แสวง ธีระสวัสดิ์ อธิบดีกรมตำรวจ
POL. GEN. SAWANG THERASAWAT DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE ROYAL THAI POLICE DEPT.
- 4. นายเอก สิทธิประศาสน์ ปลัดกระทรวงมหาดไทย
MR. ANEK SITHIPRASASANA PERMANENT SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR MINISTRY

ฝ่ายมาเลเซีย MALAYSIA SIDE

- 1. ดาโต๊ะ ฮาซัน ฮัสดี บิน ฮาซัน อับดุลรามาน ปลัดกระทรวงมหาดไทย
DATO' HAJI WAN SIDEK BIN HAJI WAN ABDUL RAHMAN SECRETARY GENERAL MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIR
- 2. พล.ต.พันตรี ฮัสซิม โมฮัมหมัด อาลี มุ.สูงสุต
GEN. TAN SRI HASHIM MOHAMAD ALI CHIEF OF DEFENCE FORCE
- 3. พันตรี โมฮัมหมัด ฮานีฟ บิน โอมาร์ อธิบดีกรมตำรวจ
TANSRI MOHAMAD HANIFF BIN OMAR INSPECTOR GENERAL OF ROYAL MALAYSIAN POLICE

ฝ่ายพม. CPM. SIDE

- 1. จีนเป็ง เลขาธิการพม.
CHIN PENG GENERAL SECRETARY OF CPM.
- 2. อับดุลลาฮ์ ฮิดี ประธานพม.
ABDULLAH C. D. CHAIRMAN OF CPM.
- 3. ราซิด มิดิน ผู้แทน จม.กรม 10,
RASHID MIDIN REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CPM.

As part of the resettlement programme, the former guerrillas were split up into five resettlement villages, four of which are dispersed along the Betong - Yala road and the fifth near Sa Dao. The objective of the programme is that each village will develop as a self sustaining community in the 'swords into ploughshares' tradition. (Coe 1988b)

Despite reservations held in some quarters, the Thai initiative in treating with the Second Military Zone was a radical and apparently effective solution to a military problem. Nonetheless, in attempting to find this solution, the Thais were faced with a delicate dilemma, namely, how to treat with a political ally of a friendly country that was actively trying to subvert by force of arms the duly

constituted government of that country, without alienating the country concerned.

The solution was straightforward. The Thai authorities did not deal with the party but rather with its military arm, viz the Second Military Zone. Because the negotiations were maintained at a strictly military level, the problematical question of political recognition and legitimacy of the CPM was obviated. Under the terms of the Press Communique issued by the Headquarters of the Second Military Zone on the Agreement:

In mid April 1987, delegates of the Second Military Zone of the People's Liberation Army of Malaysia and delegates of the Thai government held several rounds of negotiation on the question of terminating peacefully

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE SIGNING CEREMONY
ON 2ND DECEMBER 1989 AT LEE GARDENS HOTEL,
(12TH FLOOR) HAADYAI

- 08.30 ARRIVAL OF MASS MEDIA
09.00 BRIEFING FOR MASS MEDIA BY CHIEF OF STAFF ISOC. 4
AT SIAM ROOM, GROUND FLOOR, LEE GARDENS HOTEL,
HAADYAI. REPORTERS TO SUBMIT WRITTEN QUESTIONS WHICH
WILL BE SCREENED BY THE THAIS BEFOREHAND. DURING THE
BRIEFING THE THAIS WILL DISTRIBUTE COPIES OF THE
JOINT COMMUNIQUE TO THE PRESS.
09.30 GUESTS TO BE SEATED AT SIGNING CEREMONY HALL, LEE
GARDENS HOTEL
09.40 ARRIVAL OF THAI CHAIRMAN AT HAADYAI AIRPORT
10.10 ARRIVAL OF VIPS AT LEE GARDENS HOTEL.
10.15 ARRIVAL OF THAI CHAIRMAN, GEN. CHAVALIT AT CEREMONY
HALL, LEE GARDENS HOTEL
10.30 COMMENCEMENT OF SIGNING CEREMONY
10.45 THAI CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH AND JOINT COMMUNIQUE
- SPEECH BY HEAD OF MALAYSIAN DELEGATION
- SPEECH BY GENERAL SECRETARY OF CPM
- TOAST - SIGNATORIES ONLY
- INTERVIEW BY THE PRESS
12.00 LUNCH FOR OFFICIALS AND GUESTS AT HONG KONG
RESTAURANT, 2ND FLOOR, LEE GARDENS HOTEL
LUNCH FOR REPORTERS AT SIAM HALL, GROUND FLOOR, LEE
GARDENS HOTEL.
13.00 THAI CHAIRMAN DEPART FOR HAADYAI AIRPORT
19.30 THANK YOU PARTY AT 12TH FLOOR, LEE GARDENS HOTEL
HOSTED BY ISOC 4 DIRECTOR, LT GEN. YOODHANA YAMPUNDHU
- ONLY FOR OFFICIALS OF THE 3 PARTIES.
20.00 OPENING ADDRESS AT PARTY BY ISOC 4 DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
MAJ GEN. KITTI RATTANAJAYA.
- SPEECH BY ISOC 4 DIRECTOR
- SPEECH BY REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA
- SPEECH BY REPRESENTATIVE OF CPM
- CULTURAL SHOW
21.30 CLOSE

our Army's armed activities in Thai territory
...both sides reached an agreement of total
peace on 11 of April 1987 (Anonymous
1987a).

To summarise, the salient points of the 1987
Agreement are that it was an internal and
bilateral agreement between the Thai authori-
ties and the Second Military Zone without the
overt participation of the Malaysian authori-
ties with very clear, albeit limited, conditions
and obligations on both parties.

By contrast, the 1989 Accords were to present
a new set of constraints and intricate ques-
tions.

THE 1989 ACCORDS

'This a historic day. Mr Chin Peng, you may
sign now.'

Proposed by this memorable understatement
of the Thai master of ceremonies, 41

years of armed struggle were relegated to the
pages of history.

The signing was the consummation of a
drama that had opened two evenings before.

At 8pm on the evening of Thursday 30th
November, Major General Kitti Rattanachaya,
Deputy Commander, Fourth Army Region,
chaired a press conference at the Combined
Task Force Head-quarters in Senanarong
Army Barracks, Hat Yai. His guest of honour
was Chin Peng.

The 80 journalists and photographers at-
tending were collected by a fleet of buses from
the Lee Gardens Hotel and crowded into the
Operations Room under the watchful if be-
mused eyes of the Thai military police. The
arrival of the Chairman and his guest caused
momentary confusion as photographers
scrambled atop desks and chairs to capture on
film the first public appearance of the elusive
guerrilla leader in 34 years.

Smiling, alternately diffident and confident
but always relaxed, Chin Peng looked
punchy, prosperous and healthy. Impeccable
in a blue grey suit and sober tie, his dress and
demeanour gave every appearance of a benign
Hong Kong towkay. This writer was vividly
and immediately reminded of Tunku Abdul
Rahman's description of Chin Peng at Baling,
'... he looked too clean to be a revolutionary,
he looked more like a businessman' (Tunku
Abdul Rahman, personal communication, Pe-
nang, 18.3.87).

Chin Peng entered the conference accompa-
nied by his personal secretary whom he cour-
teously introduced as Miss Huang Hui Her, a
Singaporean.

Commencing the conference, Major Gen-
eral Kitti explained that Chin Peng would
confine his political comment and discussion
about the Agreement to after the signing cer-
emony on the 2nd December. Subsequently,
Chin Peng fielded delicate questions with a
polite '...I would rather answer that on the
2nd...'

He was tri-lingual, (Malay, Chinese and
English), often repeating in each language his
comments and answers. Although little was
said of substance, of significance was Chin
Peng's comment on the dissolution of the army
but not the Party. This point was keenly
grasped by the Singaporean and Malaysian
journalists and given prominence by the press
coverage in those countries. The significance

of this point is that the Accords indicate a military rather than a political settlement.

Chin Peng was scrupulous in avoiding any ambiguous comment on Malaysian politics *except*, when asked his reaction to the Tunku's comments about him, he pulled a wry face and smiled:

Q. Any comment for Tunku Abdul Rahman, who said you cannot be trusted?

A. I don't think I shall reply to that at this moment.

Q. Once a Communist always a Communist. Are you always a Communist?

A. This is his impression. Not my words.

Q. What is your word?

A. I think I shall wait until the 2nd.

Of equal significance was Chin Peng's response to the question as to whether he had expected the outcome of the struggle to be like this. He replied that he had expected it for several years.

Chin Peng was effusive in his praise for the Thai authorities and in particular for Maj. Gen Kitti, whom he described as his '...good friend'.

Afterwards, on the steps of the darkened Headquarters, Chin Peng held an impromptu autograph signing session under the glare of the camera lights. He signed in both Roman and Chinese script.

Immediately before stepping into his Mercedes limousine, he clasped his hands together above his head, turned around to the crowd and said, 'I shake hands with all of you'.

Despite its lack of substance, the evening proved to be a well orchestrated and highly successful media exercise during which the protagonist was feted like a returnee from exile. Chin Peng's polished performance, together with the ample and deliberate photo opportunities he and the occasion provided, indicate a good deal of preparation for the event. Chin Peng obviously relished the sense of occasion his presence generated and the press responded warmly to his *empressment*, with the notable exasperation of one Thai reporter who asked him heatedly in English why he did not speak in Thai!

Given the significance of the occasion it was disappointing that no European journalists attended this conference. Their insouciance doubtless reflected the priorities and attitudes of their markets. The significance of the evening was, however, not lost on the members of regional press. To witness at first hand

the appearance of one of the legends of contemporary South East Asia was to be a participant in history.

In stark contrast to the restrained intimacy of Thursday evening was Saturday morning. By 8am the lobby of the Lee Gardens was a veritable farrago. The arrival of the Bangkok press corps, specially flown in by the Thai airforce, swelled the growing number of journalists and photographers to over 250 (some estimates said 300). The press bloc now included a small contingent of Europeans which had gathered on the Friday and Saturday morning.

Significantly, at the press briefing on Saturday morning, the Thai briefing officer was specific in his request that the press be discreet in their questions to Chin Peng and to avoid any use of the term 'surrender', stressing the negotiated nature of the Agreement.

Given the sheer volume of press representatives it is hardly surprising that the details of the signing ceremony were admirably covered in all the regional papers which, in the main, devoted several pages to the occasion. Suffice to say, the security and protocol arrangements totally collapsed under the weight of the obdurate press phalanx which pushed, jostled, climbed and harried for a view of the top table to the total exclusion of the seated dignitaries. One seasoned English journalist exclaimed to this writer that he had not witnessed such enthusiasm since the OPEC conferences of the early seventies.

Distributed at the ceremony was a pink brochure containing the text of the Joint Communique issued by the concerned parties in both Thai and English, together with the details of the signatories (*sic.*) to the Agreement. The dignitaries seated along the front rows comprised the Malaysian, Thai and CPM delegations.

The official Thai signatories arrived shortly after 1015 led by General Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh, Deputy Director of the Internal Security Operations Command, followed by the Malaysian delegation led by Dato Haji Wan Sidek Bin Abdul Rahman, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The CPM delegation entered last, much to the excitement of the assembly.

Mustering as much dignity as the conditions would allow, the parties, with the aid of military police and Thai officials, forced their way



Fig. 1. Chin Peng, 30 November 1989 (photo author).

through the throng of waiting photographers who totally disregarded the harassed Master of Ceremonies' plea for calm and order. It is apposite to point out that, in spite of the apparent confusion, the Thai authorities maintained their characteristic *sang-froid* in dealing with the situation.

Thence followed a series of short speeches by each delegation leader. These ran to script and contained few surprises. Each was fulsome in its praise for the efforts of either side to end the hostilities. All expressed their sincerity in the quest for peace. General Chaovalit, as Chairman, spoke first in Thai, followed by Dato Haji Wan Sidek Bin Abdul Rahman who, speaking in English, acknowledged and greeted the leader of the CPM delegation as 'Mr Ong Boon Hwa' to the good humour of the audience ('Chin Peng' is an alias).

Chin Peng's response, in Bahasa, acknowledged that as Malaysian citizens '...we pledge our loyalty to his Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the country'. His speech also made

oblique reference to the '...current historical trend where people of the whole world are striving for peace and democracy ...' but contained no hint as to the future of the Party, stressing instead the cessation of military activities.

The scheduled press conference followed the toasts. The Thai and Malaysian delegations left the room leaving the CPM delegation of Chin Peng, Abdullah C.D., Rashid Midin and Miss Huang Hui Her to face the press. Chin Peng alone answered questions.

In a carefully scripted performance Chin Peng, despite his promises of Thursday, said little of consequence, avoiding reference to his future plans, his past or the future of the Party. He was effusive once again for the efforts of the Thai authorities in their part behind the negotiated settlement.

It should be noted that immediately preceding the conference Chin Peng stated in English:

I would prefer to answer questions in my national language - Bahasa.

SPEECH BY CHIN PENG, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF
THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA
AT THE SIGNING CEREMONY OF
THE PEACE AGREEMENTS

(2nd December, 1989)

Your Excellency ^{Tan Sri} General Chaovalit Yongchaiyuth,

The Honourable Datuk Wan Sidek bin Wan Abdul Rahman,

Honourable Members of the Delegation of the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand,

Honourable Members of the Delegation of the Government of Malaysia,

Respected Ladies and Gentlemen!

The delegations of the GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND, the GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA and the COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA have held a series of peace talks and reached a successful conclusion as evidenced by the signing of the two peace agreements. We are pleased with the outcome of these talks.

The agreements that have just been signed are in keeping with our party's policy for the realization of peace. Besides, they are also consistent with the current historical trend where the peoples of the whole world are striving for peace and democracy as well as consistent with the interests of the peoples of our two countries -- Malaysia and Thailand.

We deem both the agreements to terminate the armed activities that have been going on for 41 years through peace negotiations an honourable settlement. Without doubt, this settlement which is just and reasonable to all parties concerned has been achieved in the spirit of mutual understanding and accommodation.

We believe that the signing of these agreements will mark a new chapter in the history of our motherland and will contribute significantly to the realization of prosperity and stability in Malaysia and in the Thai-Malaysian border region.

As Malaysian citizens, we pledge our loyalty to His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the country.

As one of the signatories, we promise to carry out the agreements to the letter. We shall disband our armed units and destroy our weapons to show our sincerity to terminate the armed struggle.

Last but not least, please allow me, on behalf of the delegation of the COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA, to express our heartfelt gratitude to the GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND for providing valuable assistance for the tripartite peace talks and acting as witness to the peace agreement between the GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA and the COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA as well as playing host to this historic signing ceremony. I also would like to convey our special appreciation to ^{Tan Sri} General Chaovalit Yongchaiyuth for his far-sightedness and to Major-General Kitti Ratanachaya for his efforts in making the peace negotiations a success.

Thank you.

He then continued in faultless and fluent modern Malay using his personal secretary Miss Huang to interpret for him. Following discussions with Malay journalists after the conference the general opinion was that Chin Peng acquitted himself well in Bahasa, surprising for one supposedly so distant and 'out of touch' with contemporary developments in the country. 'Maybe he reads the *Utusan Malaysia* regularly' quipped one Malaysian journalist impressed with Chin Peng's familiarity with the language (*The Straits Times*, December 4, 1989).

Chin Peng was generous in his praise of the Malaysian authorities, suggesting that their understanding and compromise was a major factor in the peace discussions:

Because of this spirit, we ended the peace talks successfully (*Sunday Star*, December 3, 1989).

Chin Peng was explicit in his denial of the press rumours that he was to take part in the next Malaysian general election. Although, as indicated, he was not to be drawn as to his political future.

With reference to the composition of his forces he revealed that some 1100 CPM members were to come out of the jungle shortly. Of these some 30-40 were Singaporeans and, to the detailed attention of Japanese consular officials and press, two were Japanese from the Second World War. He indicated that these were to be sent home after the signing if they so wished. They were later identified as Shigeyuki Hashimoto, 71, and Kiyooki Tanaka, 77. The pair were the only survivors of 15 Japanese who joined the CPM in 1945. They emerged from the jungle in early January to a reunion with relatives and were repatriated to Japan (*Bangkok Post* January 11, 1990).

Chin Peng denied that the events in Europe and China had any bearing on the CPM's decision to negotiate and denied any pressure from China. Almost as if to underscore the point, he was swift and explicit in his admission to still being a Marxist-Leninist. He was later to add '...I want to qualify my comment on being a Marxist-Leninist. I am not a dogmatic Marxist' (Discussion between the author and Stephen Vines of *The Observer*, 2.12.89).

Towards the end of the conference Chin Peng admitted that he had had no direct involvement in the military affairs of the CPM

but had given 'political guidance' only. He declined to elaborate on this point. His comments raise an interesting question as to the nexus between the military command structure and the Politburo. The answers to this and many other questions will doubtless have to await the Secretary General's convenience - he promised to answer some of these questions in 'books and articles' shortly.

Saturday's press conference was a far more formal affair than the preceding Thursday evening. Understandably, Chin Peng was not quite as relaxed, relying upon set-piece answers to foil sensitive questions. Notwithstanding, his performance was impressive and gave every indication of his formidable negotiating skills. Despite his seemingly accommodating nature and charm he gave very little away and it is not difficult to conceive of a tight bargaining schedule to achieve the Accords.

The delegates and signatories to the Accords were scheduled to leave the hotel after lunch. Outside, on the street, a small patient crowd had been waiting all morning. An unkempt and pock marked Chinese 'businessman' struck up an amiable conversation with the writer. From this communicative source it became readily apparent that the crowd comprised CPM members and supporters waiting to catch a glimpse of their leader. On Chin Peng's appearance from the hotel they broke into discreet applause. Acknowledging their support he momentarily paused on the steps, waved in salute and, pursued by photographers, climbed into his car. Following his departure the writer turned to resume discussion with his Puckish acquaintance, only to find that both he and his companions had spirited away. The pavement was deserted.

Chin Peng, together with selected CPM executives, made one more appearance later that evening at the hotel for a dinner hosted by the Thais, after which he left for destinations unknown. The show was over.

The aftermath of a media event is always anti-climactic. After three days of anticipation and activity, the lobby of the Lee Gardens Hotel seemed unnaturally deserted on Sunday morning, a reminder that a new chapter in the history of the region had opened.

DISCUSSION

The fanfare that surrounded the Accords belies the complex negotiations that necessar-

ily preceded their signing and the regional implications that were to succeed them.

An indication of the negotiation complexities were the speculative press reports leading up to the Accords. Evidence the following headlines:

Malaysia is not negotiating with CPM: Mahathir (*The Straits Times*, November 18, 1989).

Chin Peng 'to sign Bangkok pact on Dec 5' (*The Straits Times*, November 21, 1989).

330 Reds 'will return to Malaysia after Dec 2 pact' They will be allowed to take part in politics, say Thai officials (*The Sunday Times*, November 26, 1989).

Malaysia to legalise Communists (*The Australian*, November 27, 1989).

KL pledges legitimate political role for CPM (*Bangkok Post*, December 2, 1989).

From these and other newsprint reports during this period, a picture of dissimulation emerges. Given their success in concluding negotiations with the CPM (Malaysia faction) it was inevitable that the Thais would be cast in the role of honest brokers. Their diplomatic endeavours would appear to be very much in evidence in the number of attributable comments by senior Thai sources, mainly military, in the aforementioned reports. In the time honoured tradition of diplomatic manoeuvring, these comments appear timed and designed to exert appropriate pressure on the various parties.

To appreciate further the complexities of the tri-lateral negotiations is to appreciate the disparity of the respective positions of the parties. Based on previous position statements, the likely *sine qua non* of the parties might be summarised as follows -

From the Thai perspective, the objectives of the negotiations would have been straightforward, namely, to terminate hostilities, thereby obviating an embarrassing diplomatic problem with Malaysia and freeing capital and resources for development in the region. From the Thai standpoint, both the CPM and the Malaysian delegation ought to accept in principle equal responsibility for the resolution of the conflict; that Malaysia address the issue of citizenship by allowing responsible and fair repatriation to Malaysia of CPM members of Malaysian origin and that the CPM accede to total demobilisation.

The Malaysian position was more complex. Although the CPM no longer represented a direct military threat, its presence in the Be-

tong salient provided reason enough for the deployment of a sizeable security force along the border. Given that much of the Malaysian security planning has, for three decades, been preoccupied with the idea of counter-insurgency, both the civil and military arms of the security forces held deep rooted suspicions of CPM motives. The question of Trojan Horse tactics by the CPM was apposite as also was the concomitant potential for racial and political tensions. The Malaysian negotiating team would doubtless have been briefed to extract from the CPM an unequivocal commitment to abandon the armed struggle and a clear statement of the position and intentions of the Party with a view to its dissolution. In addition, the CPM members would be expected to accede to detailed debriefing and re-orientation before the granting of full citizenship rights whilst providing a firm undertaking not to engage in any subversive or pro-Communist activities in Malaysia.

The CPM came to the talks from an apparent position of weakness. Conceived in the colonial era, matured in the Cold War and out of step in a world demonstrating a marked decline of enthusiasm for Communism, the CPM appeared to have little choice but to sue for peace. Notwithstanding, Chin Peng admitted to controlling a guerrilla force of 1100. This represented something approximating one fifth of the original army of revolution of 1948. Given the civil, political and military commitment required to counter a determined insurgency, simple arithmetic illustrates the potential for tragedy had the CPM opted for a Quixotic military solution. Given that the CPM was well established in the Betong salient, having successfully resisted previous Thai efforts to dislodge them and given that it maintained a civilian support system in Malaysia, the Party could well have opted to remain a formidable irritant. The optimum gambit by the CPM would likely have included therefore, an armistice, a recognition by the Malaysians of the CPM, leading ultimately to its legalisation and a policy of unrestricted return to Malaysia by all CPM members who so desired.

In all probability, the discussions would have been reduced to and centred around the nature of the cessation of hostilities, the vexatious question of repatriation and resettlement, the measure of political activity allowed by the returnees and the shape and format of the



Fig. 2. Chin Peng (left), Miss Her (centre), Maj. Gen. Kitti (right) (photo author).

signing ceremony. The net result was one of cautious compromise.

The diffuseness of the Joint Communique indicates the nature of this compromise. The future of the CPM and the details concerning the repatriation and resettlement of the returnees remained in question.

The resettlement and repatriation question had long been a point of contention between the three parties. The CPM consistently claimed citizenship rights for its members in both Thailand and Malaysia dependent upon country of birth. Malaysia consistently put the view that by resorting to arms the insurgents forfeited their citizenship (Federal Constitution Article 25) and the Thai authorities have been chary of granting automatic citizenship rights to all, including Malaysian born, returnees. Thus CPM members have been effectively stateless for decades.

To further complicate the issue both countries had differing rehabilitation policies for returnees.

The Thais, as part of their counter-insurgency programme, use the promise of commu-

nal resettlement as an inducement for insurgent groups to abandon hostilities. This programme was used to effect in countering the Communist Party of Thailand's insurgency and, of immediate interest, the CPM (Malaysia) were settled in Friendship Villages in the southern border region.

By contrast, the Malaysian government demonstrated caution in its rehabilitation programme, requiring returnees to undertake a variable programme of assessment and re-orientation. Exemplifying this caution was Deputy Home Minister, Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayob who, during the negotiations, offered another perspective as to why Malaysia could not follow Thailand's lead in resettling the Communist 'cadres':

We must take into consideration that the Communists had killed many of our citizens whose families cannot forget their grief. The lives of the Communists will be in danger if we allow them to resettle freely in Malaysia (*The Straits Times*, November 11, 1989).

However, a Malaysian report the day after the signing quoted Prime Minister Datuk Seri

Dr. Mahathir as saying that the Government had yet to decide whether its rehabilitation programme was to continue (*Sunday Star*, December 3, 1989).

Significantly, a Thai report suggested that the Thai authorities would provide settlements for the former guerrillas in Sukhirin district of Narathiwat province and Bang Lang, Betong and Yaha in Yala province (*Bangkok Post*, December 3, 1989). Should this report be correct, the new resettled communities, taken together with the Friendship Villages, will add an interesting dimension to the social and political character of the border region.

The question as to the future of the Party fuelled a familiar debate in Malaysia.

The negotiations and the Accords raised considerable disquiet in some circles in Malaysia, notably elder statesman, Tunku Abdul Rahman and retired psychological-warfare expert, Tan Sri C.C. Too. The imprecise commitment by Chin Peng about the future of the Party drew a rash of press speculation in Malaysia and Singapore, typical of which is the editorial of the *New Sunday Times* commenting on the Accords:

The ideological and revolutionary conflicts of the Fifties have become musty and irrelevant. The peoples of Eastern Europe are creating a different kind of revolution, having had enough of the inefficiencies and failures of Communist regimes. The CPM has renounced its armed struggle, but it is still vague about its ideological intent and bent. It is hoped the party will honour the accords, and if its members still want to make a point, that they will do so via democratic processes (*New Sunday Times*, December 3, 1989).

The Party remains proscribed in Malaysia and press reports indicate that the Government has no intention of reversing its policy. Commenting on Chin Peng's statement that the Accords dissolved the army but not the Party, Mahathir said that the Government would act if any returnee continued to promote Communism, however:

If they persist with their ideals but are not involved in any action, then nothing will happen (*Sunday Star*, December 3, 1989).

The debate about the future of the Party raises an interesting question of semantics. Under the 1987 formula the problematical question about the Party was neatly resolved in that emphasis was placed on the peace agreement between the Thai Fourth Army and

the Second Military Zone and, aside from casual reference that the Party was now finished, no details were made available as to its formal status (Coe 1988c:21). The 1989 Accords were, however, substantially different in that an agreement was reached between two sovereign states and the Communist Party of Malaya. Given that the CPM is proscribed in Malaysia, the political and legal nature of the agreement is abstruse. The notion of an 'Accord' is therefore an accurate description of the agreement in that it implies a military rather than a political settlement. It is little wonder that the future of the CPM remains under the shadow of doubt.

Relative to these diplomatic niceties was the format of the official ceremony. It is significant to note that, unlike the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army in 1945 and indeed, the Second Military Zone in 1987, the CPM did not have a public ceremonial parade and official demobilisation. The writer understands that both the Malaysian and CPM delegations opted for a low key ceremony lest the Accords be misinterpreted by the media. Chin Peng was concerned that the Accords were not to be construed as a form of surrender. The public handing over of arms could well be interpreted thus. The Malaysians, by contrast, were chary of such a public ceremony lest it be interpreted as providing legitimacy and public recognition to the armed struggle and the 'Malayan National Liberation Army'.

Quoting 'Thai officials', the *Bangkok Post* hinted however, that a formal military ceremony might be scheduled within 75 days (16 February 1990) with attendance restricted to military and para-military representatives from the three parties. The report continued by suggesting that the armed units would take at least six months to disband (*Bangkok Post*, December 3, 1989).

Possibly the most curious paradox in this political composition is the exclusion of Singapore from the Accords. Given the CPM's previous position over the question of Singapore, together with the numbers of Singaporeans in the armed units, it could reasonably be assumed that the Singapore authorities would have had more than a passing interest in the settlement. The reason for the exclusion will have to await the release of appropriate documentation on the subject. Sufficient to say that the official comment from Singapore has been cautious, typical of

which was Brigadier-General Lee Hsien Loong's view:

It would be oversanguine to think that this *de facto* abandonment of the armed struggle by the CPM marks the end of the Marxist threat, or that subversion and insurgency will no longer be problems in Malaysia and Singapore (Lee 1990).

The Accords will have a direct bearing upon the future strategic shape of the region. Aside from relieving both Thailand and Malaysia of an expensive military burden, the cessation of hostilities should allow both countries to concentrate and re-deploy available resources more appropriate to contemporary demands. For example, Major General Kitti revealed that Thailand spent 40-60 million baht annually on security operations against the CPM (*The Straits Times*, December 2, 1989).

An intermediate consequence of the Accords will be the releasing of military resources for possible redeployment on Thailand's northern and western borders. However, in the immediate future the *Bangkok Post* raised a real fear in that the Accords will leave a power vacuum in the southern border region that could be filled by the increasingly militant and violent Muslim separatists previously countered by the CPM (*Bangkok Post*, December 3, 1989).

It is more likely however, that following the removal of the CPM's armed units, the full weight of the Fourth Army can be turned upon the separatists. This will test again the efficacy of the Thai counter-insurgency methods. Doubtless the Thais will be looking forward to the active co-operation of the Malaysians on this issue.

From the Malaysian standpoint, the Accords have had the immediate effect of easing military restrictions and the lifting of curfews in the northern states and along the East-West Highway. In the longer term, the removal of the CPM guerrillas removes the requirement for the large scale deployment of specialist counter insurgency units along the border. Indication of a new direction in defence training and emphasis was given substance in a news report which reported Prime Minister Mahathir as commenting that the direction of the Malaysian armed forces would be aimed at ensuring the security of the country's land and sea areas, especially the exclusive economic zone (*The Sunday Times*, December 3, 1989). The means by which Malaysia projects its

presence over its regional interests, which presumably includes the disputed Spratly Islands, will doubtless be of interest to regional defence observers.

Finally, the geopolitical factors that might have contributed to the CPM decision to seek a negotiated settlement are worthy of comment. Germane to these are two points made by Chin Peng in his press conferences, namely, that he had expected the armed struggle to end like this for several years and his protestations that neither China nor the international situation had any bearing on the CPM's decision.

His first comment alludes directly to the inevitability of ending the armed struggle; his second, to its timing.

In both cases the China question, as ever, is material. The CPM has been a long standing client party of Beijing and, in part, a willing instrument of China's foreign policy. However, since the mid 1970's, the CPM has suffered from a state of profound disorientation. Splits and schisms notwithstanding, the comfortable certitudes of the fifties and sixties began to fall away with the Nixon visit to China in 1972 and the Beijing-Kuala Lumpur rapprochement of 1974. Contrast, for example, the CPM's 'Voice of the Malayan Revolution' (25 May 1974) commentary on Prime Minister Razak's visit to China:

China also has achieved brilliant success in socialist revolution and construction. As a impregnable revolutionary bastion, China is now making an increasingly important contribution to world revolution (Doc.240, Jain 1984:211).

with the *Peoples Daily* editorial on the friendly relations between China and Malaysia of 28 May 1974:

It is our consistent stand to establish and develop relations with other countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence ... the affairs of a country should be handled by the people of that country themselves. The social system of each country can be chosen and determined only by the people of that country themselves, and no interference by external force is allowed (Doc.242, Jain 1984:216-217).

Momentarily out of step with its patron, for the Communists of Malaya the contradictions in the Byzantine world of China's 'westpolitik' must, at times, have seemed insuperable.

The subsequent period of history was a watershed in international affairs in which the CPM found itself drawn towards the inevita-



Fig. 3. Datuk Wan Sidek Abdul Rahman (left), Gen. Chaovalit (centre), Chin Peng (right) (photo courtesy of Sin Chew Jit Poh).

bility of reaching some measure of concord in the region. The decision by the rival faction to abandon the armed struggle, based partly on an appraisal of the international situation. (Anonymous 1987b), must have left the CPM with an uneasy feeling that history was overtaking them.

Given that the CPM's history consistently reflected the shifts and fortunes of international Communism it is reasonable to assume that its decision to negotiate a settlement would have been taken with some reference to the international situation. Ironically, the CPM found itself at the vanguard of the sweeping changes besetting the Communist parties in Europe and the Accords provided the means by which it was able to come in from the cold without the ignominy facing its Eastern Bloc counterparts.

CONCLUSION

The CPM's armed struggle was a conflict that had long been overtaken by the war in Indo-China and other regional developments. Nonetheless, it remained a very private and very real war for both the guerrillas and those members of the Malaysian and Thai security forces on duty in sandbagged observation posts along the lonely and mountainous border. It became a stalemated war, of increasing irrelevance to the political shape of the region. After 41 years, it was difficult to see just

where it could go. Direction came unexpectedly.

The Hat Yai Accords represented a major diplomatic breakthrough bringing to a dramatic close a chapter of Malaysian and Singaporean history and, in line with the international situation, marking the end of militant Communism in the region. Not since the unsuccessful 1955 Baling Talks had the peoples of the region the opportunity to seriously contemplate the prospect of peace.

But Baling was another age, beset by other problems and tensions. Held under the world spotlight, the Talks left neither side room to manoeuvre. Expectations were unbounded and unrealistic. In the event, it would have been surprising indeed had the Talks ended any other way. Although the Accords lacked the drama of Baling, the press and observers were invited to the party rather than the working sessions, thereby allowing participants maximum negotiating flexibility.

Comparisons are always invidious but it is worth remembering that the Baling Talks stumbled over the questions of 'surrender', the recognition of the CPM and the twin issues of the repatriation and rehabilitation of the guerrillas (Anonymous 1956:41-47). These questions, in part, still remain, but the fact that an Accord has been achieved notwithstanding bears testimony to the good faith of all parties concerned.

The undoubted star of the show was the

enigmatic Secretary General of the CPM, Chin Peng. Elsewhere the writer has described Chin Peng as the Rusa Merah, the embodiment of the *Jinggi*, the guardian spirit of the deer (Coe 1988a). The elusiveness of his namesake was never more apparent than at the Accords. True to his reputation he materialised, charmed his audiences, said little of consequence and disappeared, leaving as many unanswered questions and a trail of rumours behind him.

It was, however, wholly appropriate that Chin Peng, having steered the Party into the jungle should, as an act of reconciliation, lead his remaining followers out of the wilderness.

In so doing it is moot to reflect whether, whilst negotiating the Accords, he recalled his lines at Baling:

I am not coming here to argue questions of ideology, but if questions of peace are to be discussed, we are fully prepared to do so. Peace is the common demand of all people. We also hope that peace will be realised early so that the misery of the people can be reduced. War is War. War will certainly bring misery to the people and will also bring hatred (Anonymous 1956:5).

In 1989 peace, as always, was uppermost in the minds of the people. The tragedy is, that it took so long to achieve.

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APPENDIX 1

The following selected transcripts are extracted from the two press conferences as recorded by the writer.

Press Conference 1

Combined Task Force Head Quarters
Senanarong Army Barracks, Hat Yai.

Chairman, Major General Kitti
Rattanachaya, Deputy Commander,
Fourth Army Region.

2000hrs-2020hrs 30 November 1989

Q. Since when have you been here?

A. I will tell you after the 2nd.

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Q. How many Singaporeans are there?

A. I cannot reply the actual number now. Wait and I will give you the number.

Q. Are you taking your people back to Malaysia?

A. Sorry.

Q. Will you go back to Malaysia to raise a new political party there?

A. I think that after the signing I will reply.

Q. Any comment for Tunku Abdul Rahman, who said you cannot be trusted?

A. I don't think I shall reply to that at this moment.

Q. Once a Communist always a Communist. Are you always a Communist?

A. This is his impression. Not my words.

- Q. What is your word?
A. I think I shall wait until the 2nd.
- Q. Have you got any comments on the developments in International Communism in light of what is happening in Europe and the Peoples Republic of China?
A. This is a big question. I prefer to answer you on the 2nd.
- Q. You look very happy tonight. Do you really feel so and did you expect this moment to come? Did you expect this moment some years ago?
A. I am very happy actually. I think I expected this to happen, earlier or later.
- Q. Many years ago?
A. Some years ago.
- Q. Can you comment on the Thai Government?
A. Yes, I think I must express our gratitude to the Thai Government for all they have done. Without their assistance this peace agreement would be impossible and I would like to express my gratitude to the Thai Government, especially to General Chaovalit and Major General Kittti, my friend here.
- Q. What do you think about the ex-CPM members about two years ago that dissolved their army?
A. We are going to dissolve our army yes, but not the CPM.
- Q. They will join you in Malaysia?
A. That will be mentioned in the Joint Communique.
- Q. You are going to dissolve the army but not the Party?
A. Yes, we are going to dissolve the army, disband the army.
- Q. But the Party remains?
A. No, I think this is delicate, better wait until the 2nd.
- Q. Is this tantamount to accepting the amnesty and the agreement you were supposed to sign in 1955?
A. I think this is a very long story to tell.
- C.P. Thank you General Chaovalit, thank you Major General Kittti. So the peace talks have come to a successful conclusion.
- A. 1100 CPM members to come out shortly.
Q. What about the two Japanese?
A. After the signing we shall try to send them home to Japan.
Q. Does the CPM still exist?
A. The Joint Communique explains clearly about this.
Q. How many Singaporeans are in the CPM?
A. In the armed units only around 30 -40.
Q. If you are going to establish a party, under which platform will you operate?
A. Our Party Committee is still to discuss this.
Q. Was your decision influenced by what is happening in the socialist world?
A. We do not interfere in the affairs of other Communist Parties. I cannot comment because I had no time to study the developments in these countries. We did not have the information on these socialist countries beyond what we read in the newspapers.
Q. What is China's stand on the agreement?
A. I don't know what China's position is. That is a matter for China.
Q. Do you regard yourself as a Marxist-Leninist?
A. Yes. (Significantly, he was to later qualify this comment to Mr Stephen Vines of *The Observer*... I want to qualify my comment on being a Marxist-Leninist. I am not a dogmatic Marxist'.
Q. When did you return to China and what have you been doing since then?
A. No comment. (In English)
Q. What have you achieved?
A. Too long to answer here.
Q. Do you regret it?
A. I will answer that later. (Chin Peng also promised to answer this question in books or articles)
Q. Were you in day to day command of military matters?
A. No. I gave political guidance only.
Q. Do you recognise the independence of Singapore.
A. Yes, certainly.

Press Conference 2

Lee Gardens Hotel, Hat Yai
1100hrs. 2.12.89.

- C.P. I want to correct reports in the press about my participation in the next general election.
Q. How many armed members are in the jungle?

Note: In the foyer after lunch Chin Peng stopped to ask of Stephen Vines, the correspondent from *The Observer*, as to the health of his old friends and Force 136 comrades, John Davis and Richard Broomc.